

## **Last Train for Normal** by **jdphoenix**

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Angst, F/M, Future Fic, Pining

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Jonathan Byers, Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2016-08-30

**Updated:** 2016-08-30

**Packaged:** 2022-03-31 22:53:57

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,260

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

The Wheeler house is full to bursting for Christmas this year. Mom keeps insisting they can't dis-invite anyone they've had over in years past, a list that includes not one but *two* of Nancy's ex-boyfriends.

## Last Train for Normal

### Author's Note:

Rating for language, not content.

The Wheeler house is full to bursting for Christmas this year. Mom keeps insisting they can't dis-invite anyone they've had over in years past, a list that includes not one but *two* of Nancy's ex-boyfriends. Which - fine. Nancy's been putting up with it for years, she gets that it's Mom's *thing*. But this year she *brought a boy home*. Couldn't they have broken tradition this *once*?

She squirms while she sets the table, seeing Alex making conversation with Jonathan like he's her cousin or something and not the last guy she kissed before him. She has no idea what they're saying and the lit up tree behind them makes reading their lips impossible - not that that's stopped her trying for the last ten minutes.

And she knows - she *knows* - Jonathan is being friendly. If Alex's easy smile wasn't proof enough, she knows Jonathan. He may not *like* most people, but he's always nice when they talk to him. And damn him, he's always nice to the people she cares about. He even keeps shooting her these little smiles so she knows it's okay.

There's something inside her, something that moves every time he catches her eye. It reminds her of crawling through that tree, the sticky, slippery feel of the in between. Only this is warm where that was cold and it curls low in her gut like it belongs there.

She turns away from the table and happens to catch her mother carrying the rolls in from the kitchen. "It's weird," she says for the millionth time.

"Alex doesn't seem bothered having them here," Mom says in that mom-tone of hers. "He's such a sweet boy." It *sounds* nice enough, but there's a tightness in her eyes Nancy knows too well.

"He's *boring*," Mike says from his seat on the stairs once Mom's around the corner. That's another tone Nancy knows too well. In

Hawkins, 'boring' is code for 'normal.' As in, someone who thinks monsters only exist in the movies and on TV.

"That's not a bad thing," Nancy snaps.

Mike rolls his eyes, inviting Steve to agree with him. Because of course this conversation had to happen in front of her other ex. Of course there isn't a *single corner* of her own house where she can escape them. Steve gives her this look over Mike's head and Nancy doesn't want to hear whatever it is he's gonna say, so she marches into the kitchen.

Mike's still just a kid, still head over heels for the first girl he ever kissed. He's never lived anywhere but Hawkins, never had friends who weren't just as messed up as he is. He doesn't know what it's like to hold a hand over your mouth when you sleep so your roommate won't think you're a freak when you wake up screaming. He doesn't get that boring is the whole point of Alex.

"You're an idiot, Nance."

She presses the heels of her hands into the counter until the corners of the tiles bite into her skin, tells herself it will only make this holiday worse if she dumps a bowl of hot potatoes over Steve Harrington's fat head. "I'm pretty sure my about face out there was my way of saying I *didn't* want your opinion, Steve."

He hitches one hip against the counter in that way he thinks is so hot. Ugh. Boys.

"Well, it's Christmas, so consider it a gift."

She says again: *ugh. Boys.*

"You and Alex? Not gonna last."

She breathes deep, counts to ten. Much as she wants to walk away, she knows Steve's not gonna drop this until he says whatever he's come to say. "Why is that?"

"Because Alex is gonna be an accountant." He says 'accountant' the way her mother would say 'garbage man.' "He's gonna go to work

from nine to five every day for the rest of his long, bor-”

She shoots him a look.

“-*dull* life.”

She rolls her eyes. She’ll give him a pass this once.

“If he ever saw a faceless monster from another dimension, he’d piss himself.”

“Says the guy who did piss himself.” It was dark and she was kind of distracted but she knows what piss smells like.

Steve ignores the dig. “Come on, Nance. How’re you gonna have kids with a guy when you’ve gotta worry what’ll happen if they get kidnapped to some netherworld?”

“You’ve been hanging out with my little brother too much.” She doesn’t even touch the other thing: that Alex hasn’t proposed yet. She can see he’s on the verge of it and part of her is terrified he might do it while they’re here.

Excited. She’s *excited* he might do it while they’re here.

“Mike’s a good kid,” Steve says quick and then he’s right back to the point, like a goddamn dog with a bone. “And you’re still an idiot.”

“And what about you? I don’t see you dating some she-man in a loincloth.”

He laughs. “I’m dating a waitress from Detroit who’s never even watched a horror movie all the way through and if she says yes, I’m gonna marry that girl.”

She gapes at him, as shocked by his hypocrisy as by his admission of domesticity. “But you just said-!”

“I said *you* can’t marry a boring guy. I am more than happy with a nice, boring girl and hope to live a nice, boring life with her. That’s not your thing though.”

She cannot believe she's hearing this. And from *Steve* of all people! Telling her she can't be normal! Ugh! Boys!

She grabs the potatoes off the counter with as much huff as is possible when picking up a bowl of potatoes - not nearly as much as she'd like - and storms out of the kitchen. Or marches. More walks because it's Christmas and if Mom sees her upset she'll be upset.

But she's still mad.

"And just what am I supposed to do?" she asks softly but still angrily, stopping a few feet outside the dining room so her voice won't carry inside. Steve's followed her with a dish of green beans and they hold the dishes between them like shields. *She* does anyway, Steve just looks like they're having a normal conversation. "If you haven't noticed," she hisses, "there aren't a whole lot of guys out there who've fought off eight foot tall demogorgons."

He quirks an eyebrow. "Now who's spending too much time around Mike?"

She's gonna dump the potatoes on his head. Screw dinner. Screw Mom. She really, *really* is.

He grins at her. "You know I was kidding before, but you really are an idiot, Nance."

He takes her dish, moves past her, sets the food on the table. Mom thanks him like he's one of her kids. Then he's at the window, where Mike and El are showing Will and Jonathan the lights on the neighbors' houses. Jonathan's the only one who thinks to make room and his eyes meet hers when he steps to one side.

Warmth floods through Nancy again, bringing with it this stupid urge to join them, to shove into the space between Jonathan and Mike. She'll be able to feel Jonathan at her back, hear his breathing. She'll feel when his hands accidentally - or not so accidentally, they're not exactly kids anymore - brush her hips and she'll turn and look up at him and he'll-

She sighs and moves to join Alex where he's talking to her father. The

thing inside her has been showing up for years; it'll leave once Jonathan does.